

## House Republican Press Release

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### **Rep. Wasserman, Newtown Conservation Official Sibley, Hail Approval of Open Space Grant**



Newtown residents will be able to enjoy expanded recreational opportunities such as hiking, photography and nature walks, thanks to a recently approved open space grant that helped the town purchase the 17-acre Laurel Trail Open Space Preserve, state Representative Julia B. Wasserman, R-106<sup>th</sup> District, and Newtown

Conservation Official Rob Sibley said today.

The Open Space grant was one of 24 such awards announced Thursday by Governor M. Jodi Rell and Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Gina McCarthy at a ceremony in Norwalk. Open Space grants totaling \$6.8 million were awarded to 24 Connecticut towns.

“The town purchased the Laurel Open Space Preserve in 2005. The acquisition of this 17-acre parcel provides natural protection to steep slopes in the area, helps prevent erosion and provides a habitat for fish and wildlife. It enhances air and water quality; preserves scenic vistas; reduces noise pollution, and helps preserve Newtown’s rural charm,” said Mr. Sibley, who wrote the application for the grant.

“I’d liked to congratulate Rob Sibley and First Selectman Herb Rosenthal on the hard work they put in to secure this grant for the town and I’d like to thank Governor Rell and Commissioner McCarthy for supporting the town’s request for the funds,” said Representative Wasserman. “As an original supporter of the law that created the state’s Open Space Program, I’m especially pleased that for several years now, it has helped Newton expand its stock of open space and provide more recreational opportunities for our citizens.”

“We’ve had a lot of success with our local open space program in the past, which is similar to the state’s goal of protecting 21 percent of Connecticut’s land area by 2023. We’re continuing our efforts to expand the town’s open space reserves by offering to buy undeveloped property as it comes on the market,” Mr. Sibley said.

“Newtown’s program would not have been possible without the state legislature’s recognition several years ago that open space was under severe pressure for development. Legislators like Representative Wasserman were determined to take steps to preserve it

and worked to enact the law that makes funding available to Connecticut municipalities to help them acquire and protect undeveloped land,” Mr. Sibley said.

“The open space program is the single most important step the legislature has taken towards attaining the goal of preserving our woodlands, wetlands and streams in their natural state. Representative Wasserman has always supported funding for the program and deserves much of the credit for its success,” he said,

The Laurel Trail Open Space Preserve hosts 1,594 feet of frontage along the Housatonic River and abuts Lake Zoar.